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11 September 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Personnel
Director of Training

THRU : Director, SIPS Task Force

SUBJECT : Language Assessment & Testing Project
(LANGAT)

Prior to commencing additional analysis of the Language Assessment and Testing (LANGAT) and the Central Qualifications Projects of the Skills Inventory System, some clarification, guidance, and authoritative requirements are needed to establish a direction to be taken in conducting further analysis.

A. QUESTION

1. Can a single 'Language System' be structured to service the requirements of the Office of Personnel and the Office of Training? (Present indications reflect a trend toward two independent systems - the traditional use of a language record for 'skills' purposes, and a system structured to support the growing requirements of the Language School.)

2. Can a single command channel be established, representing both offices, and capable of translating the needs of the two offices into requirement specifications for the new system?

3. Can O/P and OTR resolve the problem of DISCLAIM language and language factors?

4. What language FACTORS, e.g., Read, Write, Pronunciation, Speaking, Understanding, Interpret/Translate, are necessary, useful, and should be continued?

5. Can a single system of proficiency level (per factor) be employed to support both the Offices of Personnel and the Office of Training requirements?

B. BACKGROUND

1. The present Language System has been automated since the early 60's. It was structured as a computer system to support requirements at that time. Each employee entering on duty was required to complete a Form 444c - a self-evaluated judgement of his proficiency in Reading, Writing, Pronunciation, Speaking, Understanding, and Interpret/Translate. Later the Agency established a Language Proficiency Awards program based on tested results. This started a problem chain reaction that has continued to the present day, principally because clear-cut guidelines were not established to make the computer record responsive to two needs - generally as a qualification base for O/P and specifically to backstop OTR in their testing program. When the first test program was initiated, certain Agency personnel elected to 'DISCLAIM' language competence rather than undergo testing. This, then, resulted in a third condition being superimposed on the system because this fact had to be stored. Still later the employee was permitted to disclaim individual FACTORS, e.g., reading or speaking, etc. within a given language. This resulted in a fourth condition. Fairly recently OTR has adopted the State Department test rating system for individual factors that is entirely inconsistent with previous test results as stored. The present computer system was unable to handle this without a complete revision and reprogramming effort. Consequently, OTR keeps test results one way, the computer record another.

C. DISCUSSION

1. Language Factors & Proficiency Codes

The current Language Master includes, for each language competence, a separate entry of self-evaluated factors of Reading, Writing, Pronunciation, Speaking, Understanding, and Interpret/Translate as taken from the original Form 444c completed by the employee. Self-evaluated factors from Form 444c are entered as numerals with a range of 1-5, where level 1 represents the least competence. When the person is tested in factors that are self-evaluated, the numeral is changed to an equivalent alphabetic character. When the person has self-evaluated factors and is called up for testing and DISCLAIMS, the numerals are shifted to 6-9. If the person had been tested and when called up for subsequent test decides to DISCLAIM, the alpha characters are shifted to a different range of characters. Furthermore, when the person is tested in a particular factor, the test result is transmitted to O/P (QAB) for input to the computer system using an alpha character to represent the test result; OTR, however, employs a different representation in their records using numerals 1-5, but adding a plus symbol to the numeral to show a further gradation within the individual factor. An example of possible codes presently employed for EACH FACTOR are under Tab A.

One can only question the wisdom of permitting a system to be extended to a point where individual users (training officers and personnel officers, etc., throughout the Agency) are required to do excessive mental gymnastics to understand basic information reflected on a listed report. The Human Resources Systems area objective is to structure systems that are conducive to query by the several interested components. It takes no stretch of the imagination to understand that only a computer specialist could structure the parameters to do a search and retrieve what is expected with proficiency codes as they now stand.

2. Dormant Information

The date of original submission of the 444c is stored along with the factors and self-evaluated proficiency. This block of data is permanently stored in the man record and is never changed. In the many years since the inception of this program there has never been a requirement placed on the automated system to report this block of data, either as special, one-time information or regular report information. The question, then, is why continue to store the data?

3. Dates

Since only one date can be stored in the Language Master to identify test date, it becomes rather meaningless when the subject is tested in speaking proficiency at one time and reading at another time. In this situation it appears (as a matter of record) as though the subject was tested in both factors on the same date. If the two dates were fairly close, there is no problem. However, if the subject was first tested in speaking in, say, June 1967, and tested in reading three years later, an automated call-up for subsequent testing in speaking can't be done.

4. Language Proficiency - O/P vs OTR

The use of language proficiencies, per se, is different from the point of view of the Office of Personnel and the Office of Training. The latter office is interested only in test results whereas the former office is interested in language as an overall skill within the general framework of qualifications. The opposing needs have placed a burden on the SIPS effort to satisfy both offices from a single source.

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5. To satisfy [REDACTED], Language Development Program, the Language Development Committee (LDC) chose to use reading, speaking, and writing factors in setting the specifications for publishing the Language Control Register. The proposed Language Incentive Program directive, to be released soon, only mentions reading and speaking. When questioned, the LDC stated that they are interested in reading and speaking proficiencies only.

6. The SIPS task force has met with OTR and O/P on several occasions to discuss:

- the vast difference in interpretation of needs as applied to the proficiency of a given factor, e.g., O/P, from a skills standpoint, is satisfied with a one-digit code per factor that spells out the proficiency in general terms, whereas OTR is desirous of a two-digit code per factor that reflects a much finer gradation, e.g., 1-, 1+, 2-, etc.
- the fact that OTR does not test the individual factors of writing, pronunciation, interpret/translate poses a problem. The question arises as to why the three factors are carried as a matter of record. Of the three factors, OTR could make a judgement of proficiency in pronunciation from the speaking test, but does not enter a proficiency code for pronunciation when the test result is input for computer storage. The writing factor becomes important when used in terms of oriental and near east languages. From a 'skills' standpoint this may be important to O/P - even if only self-evaluated proficiency is noted. The same applies to proficiencies in interpreting/ translating. The need for a translate factor is questionable in an Agency that hires people because they have this particular proficiency, i.e., DDI 'translators.' The need for the interpret proficiency is transparent when thought of in terms of a 'skills bank' search and retrieval in which interpret and language are important parameters in a given search.

7. Without a change in both the attitude of the two offices and without guidance relative to the physical make-up of the record, there is no reason to continue the analysis and design phases of this project - an impasse has been reached. The SIPS effort cannot in any manner whatsoever produce a change in office policy - this can only come when O/P and OTR get together, iron out their differences, and establish the requirements which the SIPS effort must have in order to continue.

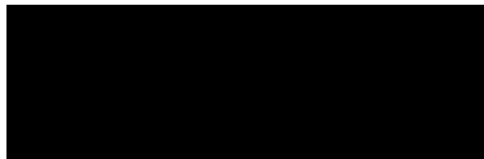
D. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. O/P and OTR establish a working committee to resolve once and for all the question of dual usage of a common base of information and to formulate requirements specifications as guidance to the SIPS effort.
2. Establish a single command to represent both offices involved in structuring future requirements.
3. That the committee resolve the question of:
 - what factors are necessary
 - what ratings (per factor) are necessary
 - providing a system of rating the factors that meets the requirements of a centralized system
 - recording (or not recording) disclaimed language and/or factor
 - whether to continue the input of self-evaluated proficiency

- provision for dating the record as a useful tool in providing call-up support.
- formulate specifications for converting to a new system responsive to the needs of both offices

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Task Force Leader
Human Resources Systems

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Feb - POLAND
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Language Development Program

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[REDACTED]

(DATE)

FORM NO. 101 REPLACES FORM 10-101
1 AUG 54 WHICH MAY BE USED. (47)